

Testimony in Support of HR 31
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Every year, billions of migratory birds leave their winter feeding grounds in spring, their breeding grounds in fall, and take to the skies on journeys that may take them thousands of miles before they reach their destinations. Many species of birds migrate through the night, coming to ground at daybreak to feed and rest in preparation for the coming night's journey.

Just as these birds need habitat and cover for nourishment and sleep, they also need safe pathways to traverse in flight. On those nights when clouds or fog prevents them from seeing the stars, which they use as a navigation guide, they drop down to lower altitudes, searching for places to come to ground.

On these nights, tall lighted buildings and communications towers become deadly obstacles for hundreds of millions of birds in North America each year .

Attracted to the light and unable to see the clear glass, these birds either collide with the structures or circle them continuously until they become exhausted and fall to the ground, where they are easy prey for rats, cats, and other predators.

The Safe Passage Great Lakes program encourages Michigan's public and private building operators to turn off unnecessary lighting above the fifth floor between the hours of 11:00 PM and 6:00 AM from March 15 through May and August 15 through October. Similar programs have been instituted for a number of years in major cities in both the U.S. and Canada. Safe Passage Great Lakes is the only statewide effort in the country.

The resolution before you, HR 31, puts the State of Michigan on record in support of this voluntary effort.

As long as there is clear glass, bird strikes will occur, but by simply turning off the lights, significant numbers of fatal encounters can be prevented in our state. According to scientists at the Field Museum in Chicago, mortality rates could be reduced by 80% if the lights were turned off in tall buildings.

We urge you to support the resolution and help reverse this unnecessary loss of so many threatened species. Without a healthy bird population, Michigan will lose a valuable source of insect control, pollination, and weed control, to say nothing of the joy these magnificent creatures bring to so many..

Safe Passage for today's avian migrants will benefit future generations as well, for they will be able to grow up in places where bird song still greets the morning sun.

Thank you